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VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RECOGNIZES WORLD AIDS DAY

Nearly 40 Million People are Living with HIV Worldwide

(RICHMOND, Va.)—The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) will join organizations across the world on Dec. 1 to recognize World AIDS Day (WAD). A global day of awareness and prevention of HIV/AIDS, the World Health Organization declared the first WAD in 1988. Since then, it has been recognized and honored around the globe and established as one of the most successful commemorative days. AIDS service organizations, community-based organizations and local health departments across the Commonwealth will sponsor special testing events and educational programs observing WAD.

The theme for this year's campaign is "Stop AIDS. Keep the Promise." The World AIDS Campaign aims to hold government leaders and policy makers accountable for the commitments they make in the fight against HIV/AIDS. "Stop AIDS. Make the Promise" was developed as a theme variation to provide the opportunity for everyone to contribute by pledging to support or actively promoting the campaign.

According to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, Sub-Saharan Africa is the world's worst affected region. The region accounts for slightly more than 10 percent of the world's population, but is home to more than 60 percent of all people living with HIV. The Caribbean has the world's second highest HIV prevalence rate.

As of mid-2005, VDH estimated that 27,800 Virginians are infected and living with HIV. In 2004, there were 875 new cases of HIV reported in Virginia.

"World AIDS Day draws worldwide attention to the global AIDS epidemic," said Casey W. Riley, director of VDH's Division of Disease Prevention. "We should take this opportunity to educate individuals on how to protect themselves from becoming infected, reach out to those who have been diagnosed and remember others who have lost their lives in the fight against HIV."

The VDH Division of Disease Prevention provides HIV and STD education and prevention throughout the state. It offers confidential counseling and referral services through its HIV/STD/Viral Hepatitis Hotline. The Division also provides HIV/STD testing and partner counseling, and medications for the treatment of Virginians living with HIV/AIDS.

For more information about HIV/AIDS, test sites and other sexually transmitted diseases, contact the HIV/STD/Viral Hepatitis Hotline at (800) 533-4148 or visit www.vdh.virginia.gov/std. You can also visit the Web site to view a list of statewide activities commemorating WAD. Events are subject to change.

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